

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
65 (4), pp. 97-108, 2015

The Sanctity of Priest's Life - a Determining Factor for an Accomplished Mission in the Parish. St. John Chrysostom's Vision

Lucian Farcașiu

Lucian Farcașiu

„Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad
E-mail: lucian.farcasiu@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study covers the sanctity of priest life, as a determining factor for an accomplished mission in the parish, as it is reflected in the vision of St. John Chrysostom. In this regard, in the first part of the study I referred to the priest as the main model of pastoral care and to the crisis of authenticity. Then I referred to the sanctity of priest life as servant, to his moral life as teacher of the faithful flock, emphasizing the need of preaching by virtue facts. Finally I analyzed the priests' sins as a cause of offense for God's people, according to St. John Chrysostom theological vision. At the end of the study there are some conclusions designed to synthesize its contents.

Keywords

holiness, life, priest factor, determinant, mission, vision, St. John Chrysostom

I. The priest - the main model in pastoral care and the crisis of authenticity

The priest's morality plays a decisive role in his pastoral work. If he is a moral man, he will succeed in imposing his spiritual message to his parishioners, because his preaching will derive from his life. On the contrary, if

he is not a moral man, his preaching will not be credible, because it does not spring from a life that embodies the truth preached.

Through his moral life the priest should be the image of a genuine spiritual father in the life of the local church or of his parish. Thus he will be recognized by his shepherds as the charismatic “old man” or “the father of the parish community”. The spiritual children gather around their spiritual father. Therefore, as a spiritual father the priest is not simply a teacher or educator, but he who gives birth to man “in Christ”. Therefore in the language of the Church “spiritual” is not he who cultivates the intellect in the sense world but according to God, he who has the Holy Spirit, who made himself the “temple of the Holy Spirit” and His carrier¹. The priest is called to reveal his faithful this image of the spiritual man by the example of his life and his spiritual stature.

The moral life of the priest has an overwhelming importance in the pastoral care. The priest must himself be healed of all sinful passions and instincts in order to heal others. In this respect Father Professor Georgios Metallinos shows that:

„The healed cleric heals his sons by teaching the way of spiritual healing and becomes their “mentor” and “catechist” according to his experience”².

The parish community where the pastor does not teach his faithful how they can be cured, but he only deals with other activities and goals (such as the liturgical program of the church or the philanthropy-charitable acts) cannot be saved and lead to deification, and precisely

„In this whole issue is the problem of our parishes. It remains to be seen whether they are places of healing (therapy) for the believers or just dealing with religious services or works of piety and charity, while the human heart remains untouched and unhealed of passions and bad”³.

This does not mean that the Church liturgical program development or the social and philanthropic work is not welcome. The problem is that the priest’s mission as a spiritual father cannot be reduced just to it. This liturgical or social and philanthropic work should be continued and accomplished by the spiritual work of healing the parishioners’ hearts and souls.

¹ Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2004, p. 28- 30.

² Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, p. 30

³ Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, p. 30.

The Sanctity of Priest's Life - a Determining Factor for an Accomplished Mission...

In order to become places of spiritual healing, our parishes must have as head a shepherd cured himself of passions and sins that is a man of exemplary moral life and a spiritual personality. In this regard, Saint Gregory the Theologian gives great importance to the healed shepherd who can become guide for others' healing as demonstrated in his famous words:

„First he must be clean and then clean up; be wise and then apprehended; become light and then enlighten; get closer to God and then bring others; be sanctified and then sanctify others; lead and skilfully advise”⁴.

Unfortunately there is at least a surface tendency for many of us the clergy to consider ourselves as followers of the Fathers simply in the virtue of the ordination we received, and not because of our hearts condition, that is our spiritual illumination. But we have to understand from the beginning that the apostolic succession, under which we received ordination, not only supports the unbroken continuity of the practice of ordination, but above all on “the uninterrupted continuity of integration in the same spirituality that is of the Apostolic Fathers of all ages”⁵. So ordination does not magically light, but involves purifying the heart and illumination of the Holy Spirit, i.e. the illumination of the heart that comes from ordination because “the unclean and dark cleric is a porter and not a carrier of Grace”⁶. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that every cleric has an “old man” of his own, i.e. a spiritual adviser to teach him and help him the work of inner cleansing.

So the clergyman cannot become a therapist (healer) of others' sufferings until he himself will have a personal knowledge of God and will hold the spiritual warfare methods. Therefore, in the Orthodox tradition a basic condition for ordination is not only the knowledge and training school but above all “learning asceticism and repentance in the school which is the authentic school of Orthodox theology”⁷.

Referring to the work of many pastors Metropolitan Ierotheos of Nafpaktos notes with pain that:

„all pretend to be teachers but few fulfil what they teach, that is the doctrine that leads to the kingdom of God. This is why most Christians do not know they need to heal. Clerics do not know

⁴ Saint Gregory the Theologian cited in Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, p. 30-31.

⁵ Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, p. 31.

⁶ Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, p. 31.

⁷ Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, p. 32.

the essence of their mission which is healing, and the people, knowing the need of healing, remain in their illness, being indifferent to healing. This is clear from the essential decay of the relationship between the faithful and the Sacrament of Penance”⁸.

If today the Sacrament of Penance or Confession is downplayed or has a secondary place in the Church’s life, this is due to the fact that we as pastors too often forget to draw our parishioners’ attention that their main calling is healing and holiness of their life.

The vocation for priesthood becomes evident both in the moral purity and holiness of priest’s life⁹. As a servant of God, the priest should emulate all people, especially by his pure and holy life. St. John Chrysostom urges the priests: „ Be a pattern of life, standing before the faithful as a living icon, an inspired law, a straightedge, a living monument of good living, because the teacher must be like this”¹⁰. Referring to the height of the priesthood ministry, the same Holy Father writes:

„but when one is required to preside over the Church, and to be entrusted with the care of so many souls, and we must bring forward those who to a large extent surpass all others... ”¹¹

This is because according to the teachings of St. John:

„For the priestly office is indeed discharged on earth, but it ranks amongst heavenly ordinances; and very naturally so: for neither man, nor angel, nor archangel, nor any other created power, but the Paraclete Himself, instituted this vocation, and persuaded men while still abiding in the flesh to represent the ministry of angels. Wherefore the consecrated priest ought to be as pure as if he were standing in the heavens themselves in the midst of those powers ”¹².

In the Holy Father’s vision, “it behoves one who undertakes this care to have much understanding, and, before understanding, great grace from God, and uprightness of conduct, and purity of life and superhuman virtue”¹³.

⁸ Metropolitan Ierotheos of Nafpaktos cited in Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, p. 67.

⁹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, „Preoții Tăi Doamne se vor îmbrăca întru dreptate...” (*Ps. 131, 9*). *Despre viața morală a preotului*, in magazine „Glasul Bisericii”, year XVII (1958), no. 6-7, p. 531.

¹⁰ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Comentariu la Epistola I Timotei*, în P. G., t. LXII, col. 565.

¹¹ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1987, p. 43.

¹² Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 57.

¹³ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 67.

The Sanctity of Priest's Life - a Determining Factor for an Accomplished Mission...

Elsewhere, Saint John defined the priesthood as “a service that requires an angel virtue”¹⁴.

The moral life the priest must embody is so important that father Filotheos Faros stresses many times it can even substitute the facts he must do: “What ultimately matters in spiritual life is not what you do but who you are and at a time the cleric inevitably has to face his own stark-naked self”¹⁵. This statement does not want to deny the importance of the deeds in spiritual life, but rather that when we are not armed with a high spiritual life, we have no credible support for the example we want to offer our faithful in preaching. Dealing with our own “stark-naked” self as father Filotheos expresses actually means the inability to provide “word with great power” to our believers, because we ourselves have not earned anything in our heart from the power of God’s word. In the light of the above, father Filotheos Faros concludes that “today nothing weakens the inner man so much as the lack of authenticity”¹⁶. This is very true especially in what concerns the priest as God’s man, meant to put a man in relationship with Him, giving him a viable model of life. Because of the lack of authenticity very often it happens the servant of God disappoint those entrusted to him to lead them on the way of salvation, even if people put so much confidence in him, because nothing can spoil more than the words that spring from a contrary life.

If the priest is not authentic, he will be just a “legalistic of morals and faith, gathering his forces to be transformed into a guardian of fellows’ behaviour...”¹⁷ being entirely careless with his soul, that remains completely indifferent to the heavy of the law, “judgment, mercy and faith” (Matt. 23, 23). In such cases the clergyman will only “use his cassock to cover his spiritual nakedness “that is his want to impose the gospel message through his outer attire and not the inner force of his life. In this case, his presence in the community will not impose consideration, but rather disregard. The lack of authenticity puts the priest in the absolutely hilarious position to indirectly assert he actually does not fulfil what he says and preaches. So “the respect for the cleric is not only required but

¹⁴ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 123.

¹⁵ Părintele Filotheos Faros, *Clerul azi-o privire din interior. Tentații, impasuri, maladii și remedii*, Editura Egumenița, p. 40.

¹⁶ Părintele Filotheos Faros, *Clerul azi-o privire din interior. Tentații, impasuri, maladii și remedii*, p. 45.

¹⁷ Părintele Filotheos Faros, *Clerul azi-o privire din interior. Tentații, impasuri, maladii și remedii*, p. 55.

his clothes, but is inspired by his personality, dignity, sincerity, integrity, simplicity and seriousness”¹⁸.

If the priest doubles his preaching with the facts of his life, which must be in full agreement with the preached word, his testimony will become credible and that his example as spiritual father will be authentic. In this situation “... the priest will preach more effectively the Gospel message of salvation not by preaching or through psychological pressure, but in a natural and un-forced way that is his life”¹⁹. St. John Chrysostom observes in that respect that “For this is the perfection of teaching when the teachers both by what they do, and by what they say as well, bring their disciples to that blessed state of life which Christ appointed for them”²⁰.

A priest has to take care of his spiritual health for the sake of those he serves, i.e. his parishioners, and this care for spiritual health should be manifest primarily in care for him.

Therefore:

„clergymen are called to become the living example of those who teach. While this involves a sincere effort on their part to become more holy people, it is well. But when they strive to project the holiness they do not possess time or to hide their sins, this is evil”²¹.

II. The moral life of the priest as celebrant.

First the holiness of priest’s life is claimed by his capacity as celebrant, i.e. celebrant of the holy, because if his soul is not cleaned, how will he dare to approach the holy altar? Therefore, the priest should compel to become “the living temple of the living God and the spiritual abode of Christ” according to St. Gregory the Theologian’s word. St. John Chrysostom asks rhetorically in this regard:

„For he who acts as an ambassador on behalf of the whole city – but why do I say the city? on behalf of the whole world indeed—prays that God would be merciful to the sins of all, not

¹⁸ Gheorghios D. Metalinos, *Parohia – Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, p. 76.

¹⁹ Părintele Filotheos Faros, *Clerul azi-o privire din interior. Tentații, impasuri, maladii și remedii*, p. 160.

²⁰ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 111.

²¹ Părintele Filotheos Faros, *Clerul azi-o privire din interior. Tentații, impasuri, maladii și remedii*, p. 164.

The Sanctity of Priest's Life - a Determining Factor for an Accomplished Mission...

only of the living, but also of the departed... and ought not the soul which receives so great a spirit to be purer and holier than anything in the world?... The soul of the Priest should shine like a light beaming over the whole world... Priests are the salt of the earth... ”²²

In another text, Saint John Chrysostom refers to the purity of priest's life based on his staying before the Holy Table to bring the Holy Sacrifice:

„And whenever he invokes the Holy Spirit, and offers the most dread sacrifice, and constantly handles the common Lord of all, tell me what rank shall we give him? What great purity and what real piety must we demand of him? For consider what manner of hands they ought to be which minister in these things, and of what kind his tongue which utters such words, and ought not the soul which receives so great a spirit to be purer and holier than anything in the world? At such a time angels stand by the Priest; and the whole sanctuary, and the space round about the altar, is filled with the powers of heaven, in honour of Him who lieth thereon ”²³.

The purity and holiness of priest's life must be preserved not only during his service at the Holy Altar, but must be maintained throughout his life. He must live in a constant state of purity. In this sense, Moses exhorted the priests of the Old Law: „And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them” (Exodus 19, 22). Referring to the purity of those who want to serve God in good conscience, the psalmist David exclaimed in his famous book of Psalms: „Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? – He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (Psalm 23, 3-5 and Psalm 14, 1-3). St. John Chrysostom refers to the purity of priest's soul showing that:

„For the soul of the Priest ought to be purer than the very sunbeams, in order that the Holy Spirit may not leave him desolate, in order that he may be able to say, “Now I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me” (*Galatians 2, 20*) ”²⁴.

²² Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre preoție*, cartea VI, cap. 4, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1987, p. 126-127.

²³ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 127.

²⁴ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre preoție*, book VI, chapter. 2, p. 123.

III. The moral life of the priest as teacher of the faithful flock.

The priest is pastor, leader and teacher of his spiritual flock. His teaching to the faithful is not limited to preaching, catechesis or just counsel he gives as a priest, but primarily the personal example of his life²⁵, because according to the teachings of St. John Chrysostom “the mass of people under government are generally inclined to regard the manners of those who govern as a kind of model type, and to assimilate themselves to them”²⁶. Therefore, “...Wherefore his soul ought to gleam with beauty on every side, that it may be able to gladden and to enlighten the souls of those who behold it.”²⁷ God’s people expect not only beautiful teachings and moralizing sermons from the priest, but above all authentic teaching that springs from his life, whereas Chrysostom’s vision is: “And all men are ready to pass judgment on the priest as if he was not a being clothed with flesh, or one who inherited a human nature, but like an angel, and emancipated from every species of infirmity”²⁸. Therefore the priest is required spiritual vigilance, especially in terms of his inner life, in this respect St. John Chrysostom showing that: “For as long as the life of the priest is well regulated in every direction, it is invulnerable to plots”²⁹. “...Thus the priest ought to be protected on all sides by a kind of adamantine armour, by intense earnestness, and perpetual watchfulness concerning his manner of life”³⁰.

So the priest should not only speak to his faithful, but as I stated at the beginning of my study, live himself the teaching he preaches.

Even more importantly, the moral life of the priest can very often replace the sermon. St. John Chrysostom notes in that regard that “it would be no need for speeches, if our life would shine perfectly. It would be no need for teachings, if we let our best works to be seen”³¹. This assessment of St. John Chrysostom does not want to cancel the value and importance

²⁵ See Pr. Prof. D. I. Belu, *Predica prin exemplul personal*, in magazine „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, year 1954, no. 5, p. 560-583.

²⁶ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 71.

²⁷ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 72.

²⁸ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 73.

²⁹ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 73.

³⁰ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 72.

³¹ St. John Chrysostom, *Omilia la Epistola I Timotei*, X, 3, cited in Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, „Preoții Tăi Doamne se vor îmbrăca întru dreptate...” (Ps. 131, 9). *Despre viața morală a preotului*, in magazine „Glasul Bisericii”, year XVII (1958), no. 6-7, p. 537.

The Sanctity of Priest's Life - a Determining Factor for an Accomplished Mission...

of the word preached in Church for the sermon will always have its very well defined purpose in the liturgical ordinance of the Church. It rather wants to draw attention to the importance of binding the word preached from the pulpit to our own deeds and to its incarnation in the preacher's personal life. Moreover, in another place, St. John Chrysostom reinforces this truth in the following sentence:

„it is true that the life of another may provoke us to emulation. But in the matter of spurious doctrine, when any soul is diseased thereby then there is great need of the Word, not only in view of the safety of our own people, but in view of the enemy without”³².

From the sayings of the saint it is clear not only the importance of preaching stemming from the priest's experience, but also the importance of the word preached from the pulpit, which has to be not only a moral guide, but especially an apologetic one, against the enemies from outside the Christ's Church.

In conclusion, as father professor Petre Vintilescu shows “the priest's life is uninterrupted preaching, willingly or unwillingly, but with the power and effects that depend on him and for which he is really responsible”³³.

IV. The priests' sins - cause of offense for God's people

Saint John Chrysostom's references to the priests' sins are very important for the accountability of their consciousness before the greatness of this ministry. He shows that although they do not affect the sanctity of the priesthood, but may be offended parishioners flock:

“For it is not itself a cause of the evils already mentioned, but we, who as far as lies in our power have defiled it with so many pollutions, by entrusting it to commonplace men who readily accept what is offered them, without having first acquired a knowledge of their own souls, or considered the gravity of the office, and when they have entered on the work, being blinded by inexperience, overwhelm with innumerable evils the people who have been committed to their care”³⁴.

³² Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 99.

³³ Pr. Petre Vintilescu, *Preotul în fața chemării sale de păstor al sufletelor. Capitole de Teologie Pastorală indirectă*, Buucurești, 1934, p. 144.

³⁴ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 66.

So ordaining involves so much responsibility from those who call for it and from whom he is ordained. In this regard St. John Chrysostom writes about the spiritual qualities of the future pastor of souls, urging the bishop:

„Consider, then, what kind of man he ought to be who is to hold out against such a tempest, and to manage skilfully such great hindrances to the common welfare; for he ought to be dignified yet free from arrogance, formidable yet kind, apt to command yet sociable, impartial yet courteous, humble yet not servile, strong yet gentle, in order that he may contend successfully against all these difficulties. And he ought to bring forward with great authority the man who is properly qualified for the office, even if all should oppose him, and with the same authority to reject the man who is not so qualified, even if all should conspire in his favour, and to keep one aim only in view, the building up of the Church, in nothing actuated either by enmity or favour”³⁵.

The priests’ sins occasion damage not only to their soul, but primarily to those who have been entrusted to their pastoral care. St. John Chrysostom notes in that regard that “by his sin priest damages not only his soul, but also the souls of the weaker believers who see him”³⁶. St. John Chrysostom asks himself:

„... what then will they one day suffer, what kind of penalty will they pay, who destroy not one only, or two, or three, but so many multitudes? For it is not possible for inexperience to be urged as an excuse or to take refuge in ignorance or for the plea of necessity or force to be put forward”³⁷.

Even if sometimes the pastors’ sins are not high, they offend the parishioners flock because they appreciate priests’ sins according to the status they occupy in the Church and not by their gravity. St. John Chrysostom notes in that regard:

“...the faults of insignificant men, even if they are exposed, inflict no injury worth speaking of upon any one: but they who occupy the highest seat of honour are in the first place plainly visible to all, and if they err in the smallest matters these trifles seem great to others: for all men measure the sin, not by the magnitude of the offence, but by the rank of the offender”³⁸.

³⁵ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 79.

³⁶ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 137.

³⁷ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 122.

³⁸ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 72.

The Sanctity of Priest's Life - a Determining Factor for an Accomplished Mission...

In an interesting way St. John Chrysostom shows that the sublimity of priestly ministry does not excuse the priest and does not cover the mistakes he can do. Therefore ordination offers no priest infallibility:

“he who has been promoted to great honour by God, must not advance the greatness of his honour as an excuse for his errors, but should make God’s special favour towards him the motive for further improvement”³⁹.

In conclusion, St. John Chrysostom asks rhetorically:

„...If, then, he ... was always so full of fear when he considered the greatness of his government, what shall our condition be who in many ways seek our own, who not only fail to go beyond the commandments of Christ, but for the most part transgress them?”⁴⁰.

On the other hand, St. John Chrysostom exhorts priests who might fall into great sins to abandon the priestly ministry before being defrocked, just to not offend God’s people:

„... man should have so much respect for the priesthood, to run from the beginning of this great responsibility; and if he was ordained and commits a sin worthy of defrocking, he should not expect others’ judgement, but resign this high service before their trial”⁴¹.

The final decision of Saint John is categorical:

„ whenever he who ought to marshal and order others is the most inexperienced and feeble of all men, by betraying through this inexperience those who have been entrusted to his charge, he commands them in the devil’s interests rather than in Christ’s”⁴².

V. Conclusions

1. The priest’s morality plays a decisive role in his pastoral work. If he is a moral man, he will succeed in imposing his spiritual message to his parishioners, because his preaching will derive from his life. On the contrary, if he is not a moral man, his preaching will not be credible, because it does not spring from a life that embodies the truth preached. Through his moral

³⁹ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 91.

⁴⁰ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 63.

⁴¹ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 67.

⁴² Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre Preoție*, p. 143.

life, the priest shall represent the face of a genuine spiritual father in local church life or his parish. The priest himself must be healed of all sinful passions and instincts in order to heal others. On the other hand, ordination does not magically light the priest, but involves purifying the heart and illumination of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that every cleric has his “old man”, i.e. a spiritual adviser to teach him and help him work his inner cleansing. So the clergyman cannot become a therapist (healer) of others’ sufferings until he himself will have a personal knowledge of God and will hold the spiritual warfare methods. Another problem is the crisis of priest’s authenticity. If he is not genuine in his preaching, his word will not be credible. Therefore, the priest must be not a legalist of morality, but primarily a spiritual man, which proposes models of his own inner experience.

2. The holiness of priest’s life is claimed by his *capacity as celebrant*, i.e. celebrant of the holy, because if his soul is not cleaned, he should not dare to approach the Holy Altar. Therefore, the priest should compel to become “the living temple of the living God and the spiritual abode of Christ” according to St. Gregory the Theologian’s word. The purity and holiness of priest’s life must be preserved not only during his service at the Holy Altar, but must be maintained throughout his life. He must live in a constant state of purity.

3. The priest is pastor, leader and teacher of his spiritual flock. His teaching to the faithful is not limited to preaching, catechesis or just counsel he gives as a priest, but primarily the personal example of his life. So the priest should not only speak to his faithful, but as I stated at the beginning of my study, to live himself the teaching he preaches.

4. All the shepherds’ sins are occasions to offend God’s people. Therefore, it is very important to achieve the accountability of their consciousness before the greatness of this ministry. Therefore ordaining involves so much responsibility from those who call for it and from whom he is ordained. Ordination does not offer infallibility to the priest, but he must be responsible for his own acts. The priests’ sins occasion damage not only to their soul, but primarily to those who have been entrusted to their pastoral care.